

LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY FOR:**July 22, 1998**

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LAST WEEK:

AGRICULTURE APPROPRIATIONS PASSES SENATE - On Thursday, the Senate approved an amended version of S. 2159, a bill making FY99 appropriations for the Department of Agriculture. At conclusion of debate, the Senate then inserted the text of its bill in place of H.R. 4101, the House version of agriculture appropriations. This results in two separate versions of the legislation and will require a conference committee to resolve. Funding levels for conservation programs closely adhered to the Committee approved levels. Notable provisions of the bill that did change are as follows:

Conservation Operations.....\$638,664,000 (increase of \$433,000 above Committee level)*

Wetlands Reserve Program...limited to 120,000 acres

(NRCS is also provided flexibility to enroll acres as permanent easements, 30-year easements, and restoration cost share at a ratio that is comparable to landowner interest.)

CRP..... Haying and Grazing Pilot Program was included.

* the increase in CO is due to the addition of language establishing the Alderson Plant Materials Center in Alderson, West Virginia.

SENATE NAMES AGRICULTURE APPROPRIATIONS CONFEREES -

At the conclusion of debate on the agriculture spending measure, the Senate also named conferees to work out differences with the existing House legislation. The Conferees are:

Republicans

Thad Cochran (MS)
 Arlen Specter (PA)
 Kit Bond (MO)
 Slade Gorton (WA)
 Mitch McConnell (KY)
 Conrad Burns (MT)
 Ted Stevens (AK)

Democrats

Dale Bumpers (AR)
 Tom Harkin (IA)
 Herb Kohl (WI)
 Pat Leahy (VT)
 Barbara Boxer (CA)
 Robert Byrd (WV)

LEGISLATION OF NOTE-

The following bills of significance to NRCS and conservation were recently introduced:

Bill	Member	Purpose
S. 2218	Sarbanes (MD)	To require the Secretary of Army, acting through the Chief of Engineers, to evaluate, develop, and implement a strategic master plan for States on the Atlantic Ocean to address problems associated with toxic micro-organisms in tidal, and non-tidal wetlands and waters.
S. Res. 253	Gramm (TX)	Expressing the sense of the Senate that USDA should provide timely assistance to Texas farmers and livestock producers experiencing worsening drought conditions. (Companion House Bill H. Res. 493)

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THIS WEEK -**YEAR 2000 COMPUTER PROBLEM-**

The Senate Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry Committee (Chairman Lugar, R-IN) will discuss the Year 2000 computer problem as it relates to agricultural business and other economic matters.

July 22 9:00 am SR 328A Russell Building

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LOOKING AHEAD -**CONSOLIDATION OF USDA OPERATIONS-**

The Senate Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry Committee (Chairman Lugar, R-IN) will hold an oversight hearing on USDA progress in consolidating and downsizing its operations.

July 29 9:00 am SR-328A Russell Building

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